

Public Town Hall on Government Reform and Restructuring Abingdon, Virginia

Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
July 15, 2010- 5:30 PM - 07:00 PM

Opening

Senator Ryan McDougle introduced the purpose of the town hall: to hear from citizens what the Commonwealth is doing well and what she could do better. The members and staff of the Commission in attendance—Secretary Hicks-Thomas, Ron Tillett, Michelle Jenkins, Howard Estes, Mike Thompson, Mike Reynold, and Senator McDougle—introduced themselves. Mr. Reynold outlined the goals of the commission and several recommendations that the Commission is developing. Senator McDougle opened the floor for public comment.

Public Comment

- Benson Redman talked about mandatory school nursing and increasing pay for school nurses.
- Tom Taylor from the Washington County Board of Supervisors suggested repealing the car tax; better funding regional jails, road maintenance, community service boards, education, Medicaid, and police; aligning regional boundaries used by state agencies; consolidating workforce programs; keeping the Dillon Rule; and encouraging research and other economic development.
- Evelyn Powers from the Treasurer's Association of Virginia said that local government treasures could help the state collect back taxes.
- Terry Frye, the commissioner of the revenue from Bristol, suggested increasing the number of DMV Selects; developing a local and state partnership for meals/sales tax audits; streamlining registration and monitoring of the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation; allowing local access to state tax records; and creating business one-stop shops for tax registration.
- Sarah Williams from the Virginia Organizing Project said that the Commonwealth should expand broadband access and raise new revenue through more equitable taxing.
- Oliver McBride from the Crossroads Institute talked about the gaps between rural and urban Virginia in education, health care, infrastructure, and natural resources. He said that with support from state agencies, rural communities have the capacity to address these challenges.
- Doug Mullins, the Wise County Commissioner of the Revenue, suggested increasing partnerships between state agencies and the commissioners of the revenue.
- Bill Smith from the Virginia Rural Center talked about the need to increase access to capital and broadband in rural areas. He said that tourism and the arts are important business in rural areas.
- Marcy Miller from the William King Museum asked that the Commission remember the importance of arts and arts education in workforce development and academic success.
- Jim Baldwin from the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission talked about the importance of planning district commissions to economic development. He suggested unifying the regions and districts used by state agencies.

- Bill Osbourne from the Farm Bureau thanked the administration for re-opening rest stops. He asked the Commission to help oppose the restoration of elk in the Commonwealth.
- Emily Edmondson from the Farm Bureau talked about the importance of agriculture to the Commonwealth and the harm that elk restoration would pose to cattle farmers.
- Delegate Joe Johnson thanked Commission members for coming to Southwest Virginia as did Dulcie M. Mumpower, Chair of the Washington County Board of Supervisors.
- Delegate Anne B. Crockett-Stark talked about the unique needs of Southwest Virginia and its capacity for business innovation.

Closing

The Commission members thanked those present for their comments. Mr. Estes and Mr. Thompson noted that the government exists to serve citizens. Secretary Hicks-Thomas said that she would take constituent concerns back to her fellow Cabinet members as well. Ms. Jenkins commented on the self-sufficiency and cooperative spirit of citizens in Southwest Virginia. Mr. Tillett said that his committee, Consolidation of Shared Services, will look at debt collection. Mr. Reynold said that the public could submit additional comments at www.reform.virginia.gov or by emailing reform@governor.virginia.gov. Seeing no more public comment, Senator McDougle adjourned the meeting at 7:10 pm.